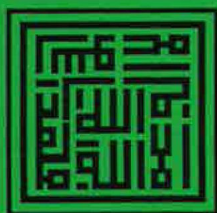


*The 'Abdal, The 'Awtad
&
The 'Aqtab
(ﷺ)*



Compiled by:
Ibrahim Muhammad Hakim



In the Name of Allah,
All-Merciful, Bestower of Mercy
Praise be to Allah, Cherisher of all the worlds,
And glorious blessings and strengthening peace be
upon our Master and Guide Muhammad,
and upon his family, companions, and inheritors until
the Last Day!

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Allah (ﷻ) has made among His servants those who are righteous, and those who are at more sublime levels of righteousness. He has placed each of His servants in varying levels, some occupying a common level, some occupying the level of the righteous, others occupying the level of the saints, and some occupying the level of those brought to close proximity to the Divine Presence. This [differentiation into levels] is something attested to in many places in the Qur'an, and in many hadiths, and something well known to those who know.

The existence of the saints (*Awliya'* (ﷺ) in Arabic), their characteristics, their levels, and their numbers is what we will explore in this short essay. Within the level of the saints, Allah (ﷻ) has established a hierarchy, above which there is no hierarchy. These servants occupy the most sublime levels of proximity to Allah, enjoying what even the angels do not possess. He has furthermore granted these special elect servants manifest gifts and abilities, which the common man would be hard pressed to understand. Allah (ﷻ) has revealed to them the secrets of His Attributes, and the secrets of His kingdoms, and placed in their hands the reigns of authority and control, so that they can dispense with the creation as true representatives (*Khalifah*) of their Master.

Consider as a short example the cousin of the Prophet and the King Sulayman whose name was Asif ibn Barkhiya. When the Prophet (ﷺ), asked his subjects who could bring to him the throne of Bilqis, the queen of Yemen, before she would arrive, a powerful Jinni stood and said he could bring it to him

before he could stand up! At that moment, Asif, whom Allah described as someone “having (special) knowledge of the Book” said that he could bring him the throne before Sulayman (ﷺ) could finish blinking his eyes. And so he did. (Sura 27:40).

At the top of these saints (*Awliya'*) stands the *Qutb* [Pole] (ﷺ), who has two Imams working under him, and 10 helpers. Below him lie the four *Awtad* [Pegs], each of who are responsible for the four sections of the world. Under them lie the *Abdal* [Substitutes], whose numbers can either be 7, 14, 30, 40, or 60, but are usually seven in every generation. Under them are the *Nuqaba'* [Chiefs], who can number 40 or 300, and under them are the *Nujaba'* [Nobles], below whom are the rest of the righteous saints.

Outside this hierarchy are the *Afrad* [Solitaries], who are not under the jurisdiction of the *Qutb* (ﷺ), but rather remain alone with Allah unaware of what is around them. They are the human counterpart of those angelic spirits called the *Muhayyamun* (meaning the “bewildered in love”), or the ‘*Aalun* [Sublime ones] in the Qur’an (38:75). These were the spirits who were excused from bowing down to Adam (ﷺ), because they were so engulfed in witnessing the Beauty of Allah (ﷻ) that they were not even aware of the existence of themselves, let alone the existence of Adam (ﷺ)! So these *Afrad* are like them, and two short stories will explain this more.

An old man in Morocco had a guest over his house, and it was time to pray ‘Asr, so they went out to the well to get the water for ablution. The well water was too low, so they needed a bucket. The host told his guest, “I will hold the rope here while you dip it in the well and bring up the water.” To his great surprise, the guest said, “but why don’t you just tie the rope to

this great tree you have in your yard, instead of tiring yourself holding it!" At this comment, the host said, "my son, I have been living in this house for 60 years, and was not aware of this tree due to my continuous contemplation of Allah!"

It is also related that a whenever a certain man would see children playing outside his house, he would ask the neighbors, "whose children are these?" and the neighbors would say, "they are your children!" This man would forget his children due to his being overwhelmed in Divine contemplation.

This was also the state of the noble Companion Abu Darda' (رضي الله عنه). Someone asked his wife after he passed away, "what was the greatest action of your husband?" and she said, "contemplation."

These unique individuals, because of their special state of being, have their needs taken care of by Hand of Allah (ﷻ), and they number only a handful in the whole world's population. Therefore, they are not given any authority over the creation of Allah, as the other saints within the hierarchy under the *Qutb* have been given, since they would cause chaos were they entrusted with the Keys of the Divine Kingdom.



Let us now turn to some of the hadiths that mention these saints, and their descriptions.

✽ From Mu'adh ibn Jabal: "Whoever fully realizes these three, then he is among the *Abdal*, those by whom the world and its people are established: 1- full contentment with the Divine Decree, 2- perseverance in abstaining from the forbidden, and 3- anger which only manifests for the sake of Allah (ﷻ) Himself." [related by Daylami]

✧ From Abu Sa'id al-Khudri: "The *Abdal* from my nation did not enter into Paradise with their actions, but rather through the mercy of Allah (ﷻ), through the unparalleled generosity of their souls, the fact that they hold no grudge or hatred against anyone and their hearts being at peace with everyone, and through mercy for the entirety of Muslims."

[related by Bayhaqi, and similar versions by Ibn Abi Dunya, Tabarani, Ibn 'Asakir, Ibn Lal, Ibn 'Adiyy, and Abu Muhammad al-Khallal in his book *Karamat al-Awliya'*]

✧ From Abu Darda': "the *Abdal* have not come to be greater than the rest of the people by performing much fasting or prayers or *tasbih*, but rather by excellent morals/manners, being true in their scrupulousness, their sound intentions, their hearts being at peace with all the Muslims, and giving others sincere counsel for the sake of Allah." [related by Hakim at-Tirmidhi in *Nawader al-Usul*].

✧ "The mark of the *Abdal* is that they do not curse anyone or anything at all." [related by Ibn Abi Dunya].

✧ Abu Zannad (the famous Tabi'i follower) said: "when Prophethood ended and they were the supports of the earth – Allah substituted their places with 40 men from the nation of Muhammad (ﷺ), who are named "*Abdal*" (the Substitutes). Not one of them dies except that Allah (ﷻ) replaces him with another one to take his place, and they are (now) the supports of this earth. The hearts of 30 of them contain the same certainty [*yaqin*] which Sayyidina Ibrahim (ﷺ) had. They did not succeed or rise above the other people with much fasting or prayer...but rather through being truthful in their scrupulousness, having noble intentions, having sound wholesome hearts, and

giving all the Muslims sincere counsel, desiring by that the Pleasure of Allah (ﷻ), with patient forbearance, and a merciful core (of being), and humility without being meek. They do not curse anyone, or harm anyone, nor do they see themselves as being higher or nobler than anyone under them, or envy those above them. They do not fake their humility, nor fake their being dead to the world, nor are they ostentatiously impressed with themselves. They do not love the world, nor love for its sake. They do not experience any estrangement today, nor mindlessness tomorrow.”[related by Ibn Abi Dunya]

✽ From Ibn Umar: “The best of my nation in every generation are 500, and the Abdal are 40 among them...” They said, “O Messenger of Allah, what are their actions?” He said, “they are those who pardon the ones who oppress them unjustly, who act with excellence towards those who mistreat them, and who share with others in what Allah (ﷻ) gave them.” [related by Tabarani, Abu Nu’aym, and Ibn ‘Asakir]

✽ From Hudhayfa ibn Yaman: “The Abdal in my community are in Sham. 30 of them are on the way of Ibrahim (upon him be peace), 20 of them are on the way of ‘Isa (upon him be peace), and 20 of them have been given some of the instruments which the *Khalifa* Da’ud (upon him be peace) was given.” [related by Hakim at-Tirmidhi]

✽ From Ibn Mas’ud: “Among His creation, Allah has 300, whose hearts are upon the hearts of Adam (ﷺ). And among His creation, Allah has 40, whose hearts are upon the hearts of Musa (ﷺ) And among His creation, Allah (ﷻ) has 7, whose hearts are upon the heart of Ibrahim (ﷺ). And among His creation, Allah has 5, whose hearts are upon the heart of Jibril (ﷺ).

And among His creation, Allah has 3, whose hearts are upon the heart of Mika'il (ﷺ).

And among His creation, Allah (ﷻ) has one, whose heart is on the heart of Israfil (upon him be peace). So when this one dies, Allah (ﷻ) replaces his place with one of the three. And when one of the three dies, Allah (ﷻ) replaces his place with one of the five. And when one of the five dies, Allah (ﷻ) replaces his place with one of the seven. And when one of the seven dies, Allah (ﷻ) replaces his place with one of the forty. And when one of the forty dies, Allah (ﷻ) replaces his place with one of the 300. And when one of the 300 dies, Allah (ﷻ) replaces his place with one of the common righteous servants. Through these people, Allah (ﷻ) gives life and death, sends down rain, grows vegetation, and diverts disasters.” He was asked, “how is it that through them life and death are given?” He answered, “because they ask Allah (ﷻ) to increase the community, and so they are increased. And they supplicate Allah (ﷻ) against the tyrants, and so their number is decreased. And they ask for rain, and rain is given because of them, and they ask for vegetation, and the earth sprouts forth because of them, and they make du’aa to Allah (ﷻ), and because of them Allah (ﷻ) averts His tribulations.” [related by Ibn ‘Asakir, and Abu Nu’aym].

✽ From Imam ‘Ali (ﷺ): “the Abdal are in Sham, and they are 40 men. Whenever one of them dies, Allah (ﷻ), substitutes another in his place. By them, rain is sent down, enemies are conquered, and punishment is diverted from the people of Sham.” [related by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal]

✽ Also from Imam ‘Ali (ﷺ): “Do not curse the people of Sham, for the Abdal are among them.”

[related by Tabarani, Bayhaqi, al-Hakim, and Ibn 'Asakir]

✧ Also from Imam 'Ali: "the Abdal are from Sham, and the Nujaba' are from Egypt, and the righteous saints are from Iraq." [related by Ibn 'Asakir]

✧ From Anas: "The Abdal are 40 men and 40 women. When a man dies among them, Allah (ﷻ) replaces him with another man. And when a woman dies among them, Allah (ﷻ) replaces her with another woman." [related by Daylami and al-Khallal]

✧ Also from Anas: "The Abdal are 40, 22 of them are in Sham, and 18 of them are in Iraq...when the command of Allah (ﷻ) comes to pass, then all of them will die at once, and the Day of Judgment will begin." [related by Hakim at-Tirmidhi]

✧ Also from Anas: "The earth will never be empty of 40 (or 30) men who are similar to the Intimate Friend of Allah (Sayyidina Ibrahim (ﷺ)). By them rain falls and victory is granted. Not one of them dies except that Allah replaces him with another." [related by Tabarani, and a similar hadith on the authority of 'Ubada ibn Samit is related by Imam Ahmad, and on the authority of Abu Hurayra related by Ibn Hibban]

✧ Abu Hurayra said: I entered upon the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace be upon him) in the mosque, and he said to me, "O Abu Hurayra, in this hour, a man will walk through this door, who is one of the seven people of the world through whom Allah diverts punishment from the Earth's inhabitants." Just then a Habashi (Ethiopian) entered in through that door. He was bald and maimed, and was carrying a container of water on his head. So he said: "O Abu Hurayra, that's him," and then said to the man three times: "Welcome to Yasaar." This man used to sweep

and clean the Mosque, and was a servant of Mughira ibn Shu'ba.[related by al-Khallal].

✽ Finally, Ibn 'Asakir narrates that Uthman ibn 'Ata (one of the Tabi'in) was having a conversation with his father, who told him: "the Abdal are forty *Insan* (humans)." So he said to his father, "forty men?" and his father replied, "do not say men, but rather say humans, for there could be women among them." This indicates that this hierarchy of saints is not only occupied by men, but also by women.

Shaykh Abu Bakr al-Yafi'i wrote in his book *Kifayat al-Mu'taqid* ("Sufficiency of the Believer"): "The righteous are many, and they mix with the common people for the sake of their worldly and other-worldly benefit.

And the *Nujaba'* are fewer in number than them (the *Saliheen*), and the *Nuqaba'* are fewer in number than the *Nujaba'*, and they mix with the elect servants.

And the *Abdal* occupy the great countries of the earth. They only occupy a country one after another, so blessed be the people of a land among whom are two *Abdal*.

And the *Awtad* are 4, one in Sham, one in Yemen, one in the East, and one in the West.

And Allah (ﷻ) causes the *Qutb* (ﷺ) to travel the four horizons of the Earth, just as the constellations travel their course across the sky. And the states of the *Qutb* (ﷺ) are veiled from the common and the elect, out of jealousy of Allah (ﷻ) for him, except that he is seen to be (at the same time) knowledgeable and ignorant, dim-witted and intelligent, taking and leaving, near and far, gentle and harsh, safe and dangerous (meaning that he combines in himself the opposites). And the states of the *Awtad* are revealed to the elect.

And the states of the *Abdal* are revealed to the elect and the Gnostics (who are under the elect). And the states of the *Nuqaba'* and the *Nujaba'* are veiled from the common, but they are revealed to each other. And the states of the righteous (*Saliheen*) are revealed to both the common and the elect, so that Allah's plans may be enacted.

The number of the *Nujaba'* are 300, and the number of the *Nuqaba'* are 40, and the number of the *Abdal* is said to be 30, or 14, or 7 (and this is the most correct number), and the number of the *Awtad* are four. So when the *Qutb* dies, Allah (ﷻ) replaces him with the best of the four *Awtad*. And when one of the four die, Allah (ﷻ) replaces him with the best of the seven *Abdal*...and so on.

And when Allah (ﷻ) desires to start the Day of Judgment, He takes the life of all of them. Because of them and through them, Allah (ﷻ) sends down rain from the sky and averts His punishment and tribulations from His servants

And the *Qutb* (ﷺ) is the one mentioned in the hadith of Ibn Mas'ud above who is on the heart of the angel Israfil (upon him be peace), and his relation to the rest of the saints is like the center of the circle in relation to the circumference, and thus it is through him that Allah sets right the affair of the world...(in this hadith), the Prophet (ﷺ) did not mention anyone as being upon his heart, since Allah never created anyone whose heart could be comparable to his heart in its luminousness, subtlety, and nobility.

So the hearts of the remaining Prophets (ﷺ) and angels (ﷺ) and saints (ﷺ) are to his heart like the light of the distant stars compared to the perfect light of the proximate Sun ”



The great saint Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, who was the student of the 8th descendant of the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "whoever says the following 10 times in the morning, then Allah will inscribe him as one of the *Abdal*:

✧ *Allahumma Ighfir li-Ummati Muhammad (Salla allahu alayhi wa sallam)*

Allah, forgive the community of Muhammad (ﷺ)

✧ *Allahumma Irham Ummati Muhammad (Salla allahu alayhi wa sallam)*

Allah, have mercy on the community of Muhammad (ﷺ)

✧ *Allahumma Farrij 'An Ummati Muhammad (Salla allahu alayhi wa sallam)*

Allah, relieve the hardship of the community of Muhammad (ﷺ)

✧ *Allahumma Aslih Ummati Muhammad (Salla allahu alayhi wa sallam)*

Allah, rectify the community of Muhammad (ﷺ)

✧ *Allahumma waj'alna min Ummati Muhammad (Salla allahu alayhi wa sallam)*

Allah, and make us among the community of Muhammad. (ﷺ)"

This supplication is very comprehensive of the virtues of the *Abdal*, and contains them within it, as one can see from the narration of Abu Zannad related above.



wa Allahu A'lam



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